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STAR FORCE





ATARI FORCE



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THE YEAR:
2005 AD.

THE PLACE: THE NORTH CAL
HEADQUARTERS OF THE ATARI
TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE,
IN THAT PART OF THE NORTH AMERICAN
CONTINENT THAT USED TO BE KNOWN AS
CALIFORNIA BEFORE THE "BREAK-UP."

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRUDER ALERT!

**THE SITUATION:
A WORLD IN CRISIS...**

SURE, AND THIS
LITTLE BUGGY'S
RADAR SHIELD
HAS DONE ITS
JOB WELL!

IT'S WITHIN
SHOUTING DISTANCE
OF YON FINE BUILDING THAT
I AM, BUT NOT A PEEP
HAVE I HEARD FROM
THEIR SECURITY SCREENS!

I'LL BE
TAKING THEM
UNAWARES,
I THINK--

--AND AFTER
ALL, WASN'T THAT
THE PLAN?



ITS ENGINES MUFFLED
BY HIDDEN BAFFLES,
THE DARK-PAINTED
HOVERCRAFT SETTLES
SILENTLY INTO THE
SHADOWS OF A MOON-
LIT GROTTA...

THE LADS AT ATARI SECURITY
HAVE GROWN A MITE COCKY
WITH THEIR PRETTY WEAPONS
AND CLEVER SENSORS...

...AND TONIGHT,
I'M THINKING, IT'S
GOING TO COST
THEM DEAR.

AHH, BUT IT'S A
SAD THING THAT
THEY'VE SO
SOON FORGOTTEN
THE LESSONS OF
THE FIVE DAY WAR!

ALMOST, IT'S ENOUGH
TO MAKE MY HEART
BLEED.

SURE, IT'S A
RUDE AWAKENING
THAT AWAITS
THEM.

I THINK I'LL
LET THEM
SLEEP A
WHILE
LONGER.

AND THERE THEY BE,
LIKE DREAMING
BABES.

WITH THE IMAGE INTENSI-
FIER BUILT INTO MY
GOGGLES, I'M SEEING
THEM CLEAR AS A
BRIGHT SUMMER MORN
IN COUNTY KERRY...

"... AND THE POOR DARLINGS DON'T EVEN KNOW THEY'RE BEING WATCHED."

DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO THE SOUND OF THAT FORCE FIELD.

BLASTED THING MAKES MY TEETH ACHE.

ULTRA-FREQUENCY SONICS... THEY'RE A KILLER, ALL RIGHT.

YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE GUARD-DOGS, THE NIGHT WE FIRST TURNED IT ON.

THE DOGS COULDN'T STAND IT-- THEY STARTED HOWLING AS SOON AS THE FIELD WENT UP, AND DIDN'T STOP TILL WE SHUT IT DOWN NEXT MORNING.

NOW WE WALK PATROL WITHOUT THE DOGS... AND I MISS 'EM.

CHECKPOINT DELTA REPORTING TO BASE SECURITY...

...ALL CLEAR
AT THE
PERIMETER.

IT'S A NICE NIGHT. TOO
BAD YOU FOLKS DOWN
IN THE PIT CAN'T JOIN US.

LET'S LEAVE THE
SLANG BACK IN THE
DORMS, DELTA
CHECKPOINT.

WE DON'T CALL IT
"THE PIT"-- PROPER
TERMINOLOGY IS SECURITY
BASE STATION, SUB-
LEVEL SEVEN!

BUT THANKS
FOR THE
THOUGHT.

ROGER,
BASE SECURITY.
CHECKPOINT DELTA,
SIGNING OUT.

IT IS A
BEAUTIFUL
NIGHT UP
THERE,
CAPTAIN.

I ALMOST
WISH...

SO DO
WE ALL,
SON.

BUT THE WAR
LEFT THINGS PRETTY
UNSETTLED,
OUTSIDE.

WE HAVE
TO BE ON
GUARD
CONSTANTLY.

LET'S
HOPE THOSE
MEN
REMEMBER
THAT...

"BECAUSE, IF
THEY SLACK
OFF--

"--IT
COULD
MEAN
DISASTER!"

WHAT
THE--?

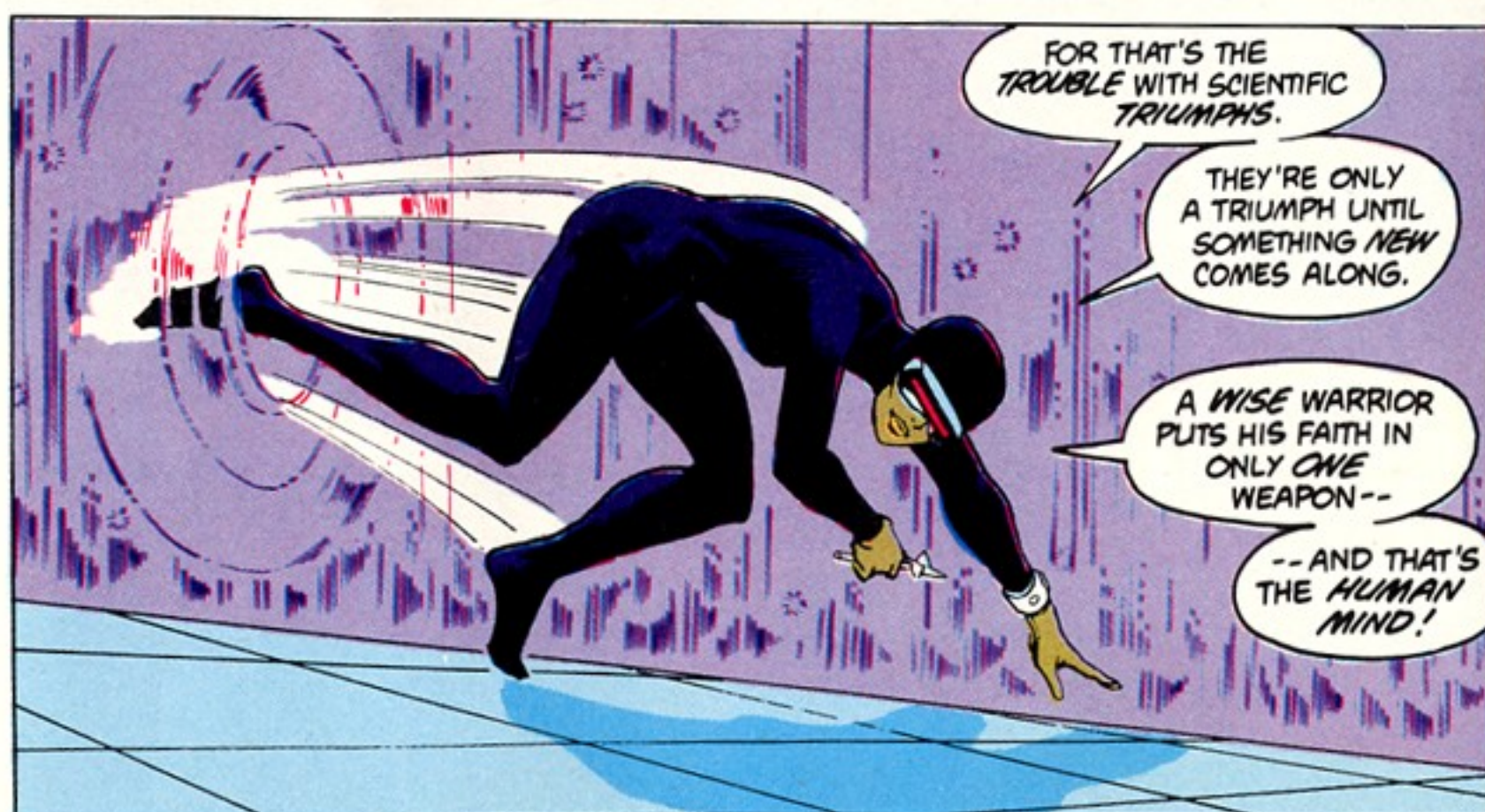
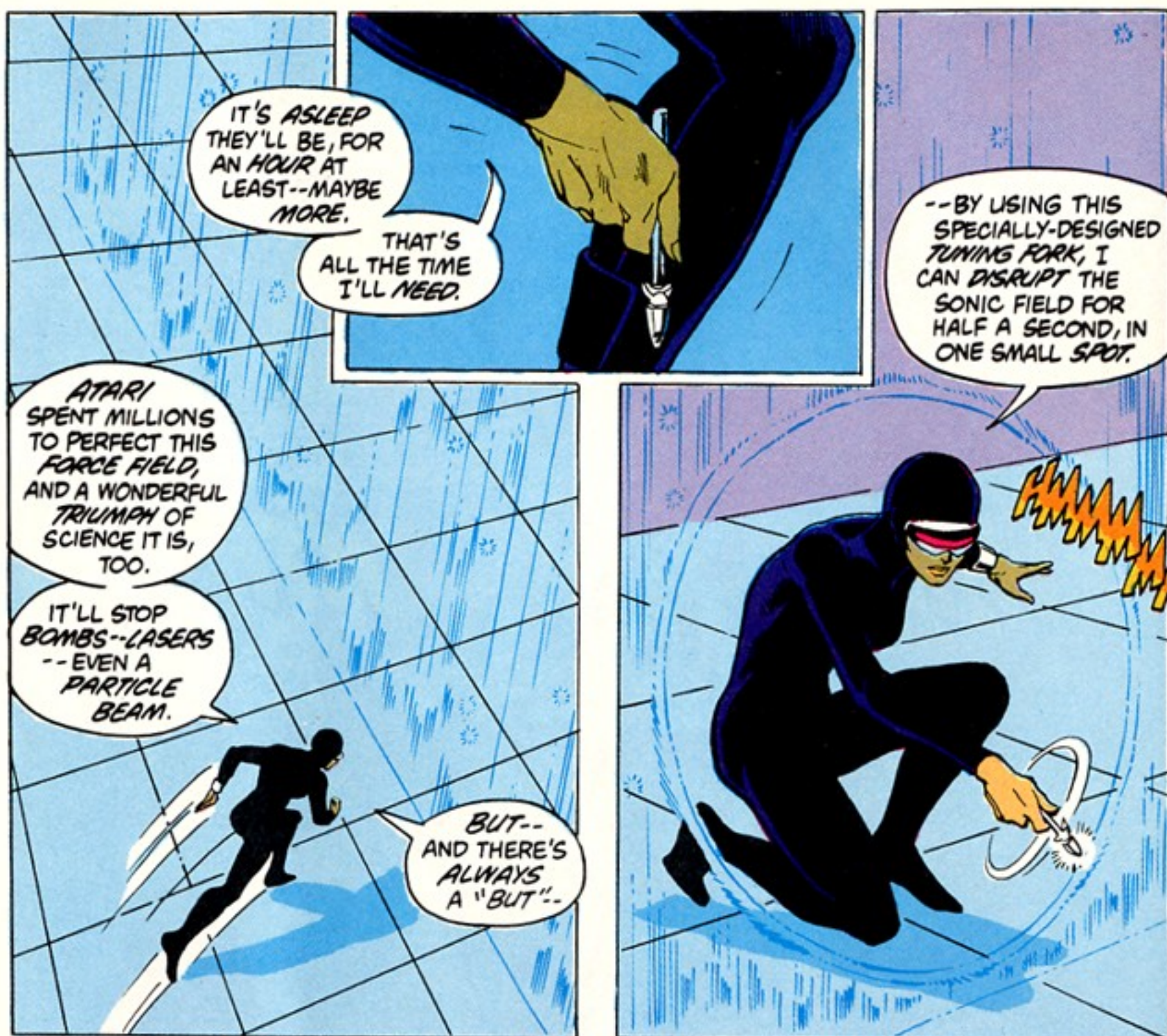
LESSON ONE IN
GUERRILLA WARFARE
TACTICS: GRAB THE
INITIATIVE AND
KEEP IT--

--BECAUSE,
IF YOU LET IT SLIP--

WHAK!

KTHUNK!

--YOU'RE
FINISHED!



IN "THE PIT" (OR, IF YOU PREFER,
SECURITY BASE STATION, SUB-
LEVEL SEVEN)...

BEEP BEEP

CAPTAIN--
WE'VE GOT A
FIELD BREAK
AT CHECKPOINT
DELTA!

NO...NO, THAT'S
FUNNY...

PROBABLY JUST A
MOMENTARY POWER
SURGE.

SENSORS SHOW
THE BREAK
CLOSED BY
ITSELF.

KEEP AN EYE OPEN
TO SEE IF IT
REPEATS.

NO ALARMS...
NO EXTRA GUARDS
ON THE PROWL...!

I'D CALL IT THE
LUCK OF THE IRISH--
BUT I'M NOT A
WOMAN TO BELIEVE
IN LUCK!

NOW IT'S TIME
TO BE TAKING THE
NEXT STEP.

FOR WEEKS, THERE'VE
BEEN RUMORS OF A
TOP SECRET OPERATION
CALLED PROJECT: MULTIVERSE
A'WORKING DOWN IN
SUB-LEVEL SEVENTEEN.

THAT'S
WHERE I'LL
BE HEADING...

...AND PITY
ANYONE WHO TRIES
TO STOP ME!




AND, AS THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK-GARBED FIGURE WITH THE LILTING GAELIC ACCENT MAKES HER WAY FURTHER INTO THE ATARI HEADQUARTERS COMPOUND, WE MUST TURN OUR ATTENTION TO A NEW SCENE, 90,000 KILOMETERS STRAIGHT UP...

THE PLACE: ATARI SOLAR SATELLITE STATION ONE, DESIGNED TO BRING THE SUN'S ENERGY TO A FUEL-STARVED WORLD.

EASY WITH THAT ELECTRIC TORCH, LANSKY.

WE'RE TRYING TO WELD THESE PANELS TOGETHER--NOT MELT THEM TO SLAG!

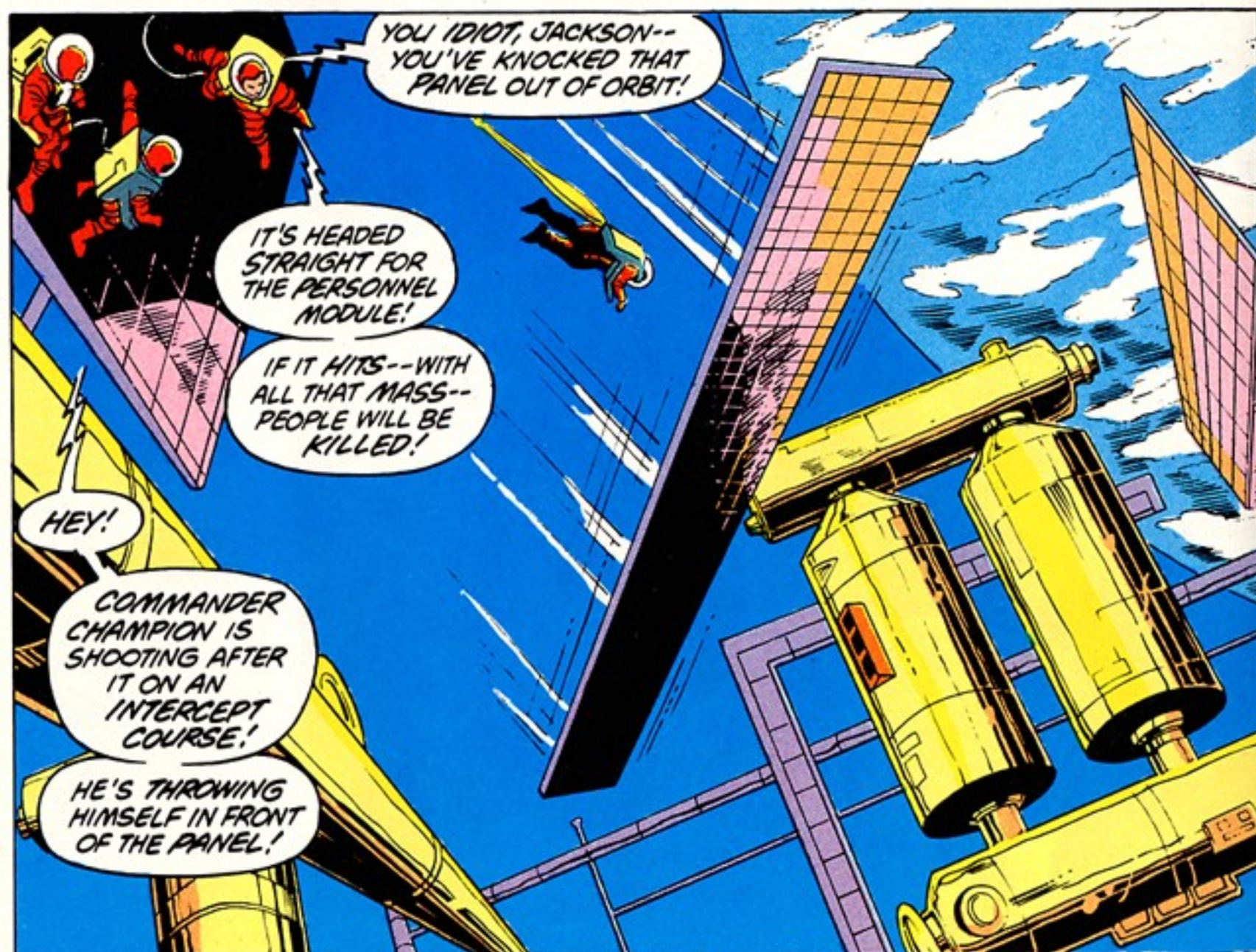


THE MAN: MARTIN
CHAMPION, COMMANDER
OF STATION ONE AND
CHIEF TROUBLESHOOTER
FOR ATARI INSTITUTE...

SURE THING,
COMMANDER.

GUESS I'M
STILL NOT USED
TO WEIGHTLESS
CONSTRUCTION
WORK.

REBUILDING
THE GOLDEN
GATE WAS A
WHOLE LOT
SIMPLER
THAN THIS!





--AND IT WAS ONLY BULL-HEADED DUMB LUCK THAT YOU WEREN'T, MARTIN, MY FRIEND.

NOW THAT I'VE GOT YOU HERE IN SICK BAY, I'VE HALF A MIND TO KEEP YOU HERE--AND OUT OF TROUBLE.

LUCAS, LIKE ALL MEDICOS--

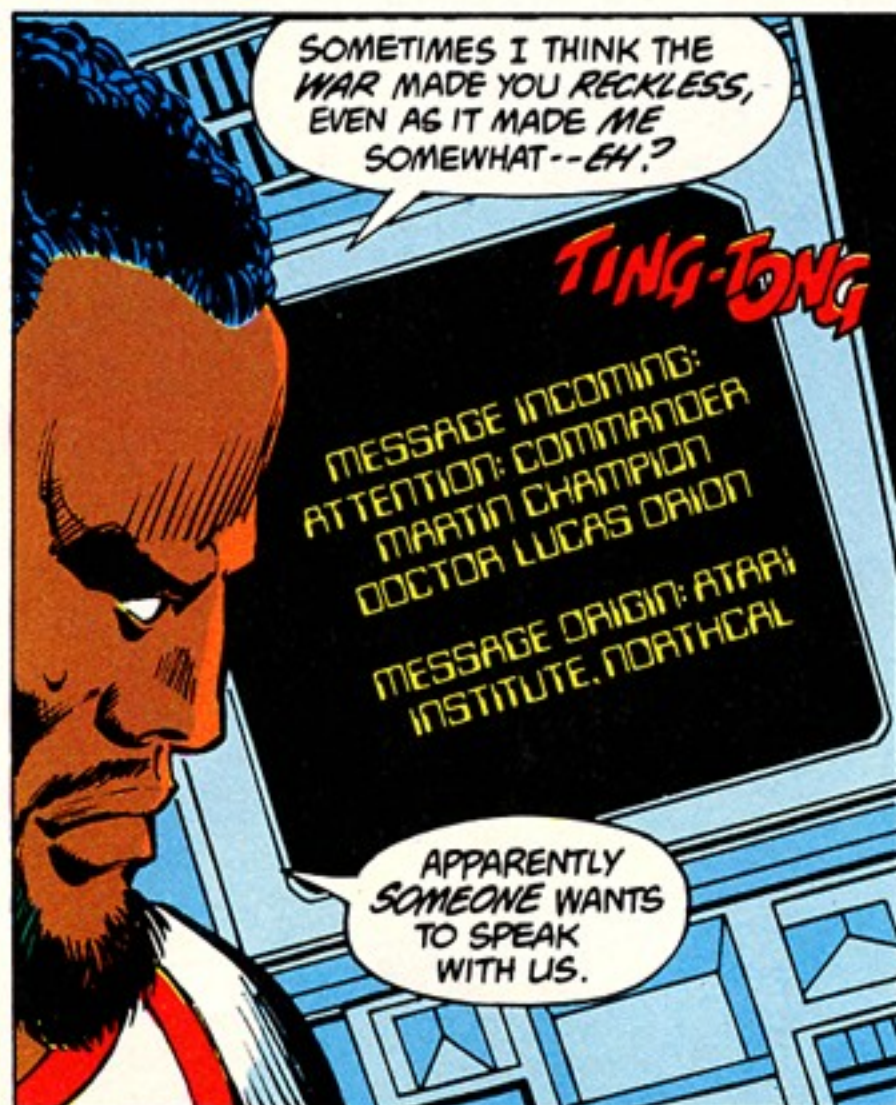
--YOU'RE A WORRY-WART.

I SURVIVED, DIDN'T I?



BESIDES, I KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING. I USED THAT SAME TACKLE A DOZEN TIMES OR MORE BACK ON THE GRIDIRON AT ANNAPOLIS.

SPACE CONSTRUCTION ISN'T A GAME OF FOOTBALL, MARTIN, AS YOU KNOW VERY WELL...!



SOMETIMES I THINK THE WAR MADE YOU RECKLESS, EVEN AS IT MADE ME SOMEWHAT--EH?

TING-TONG

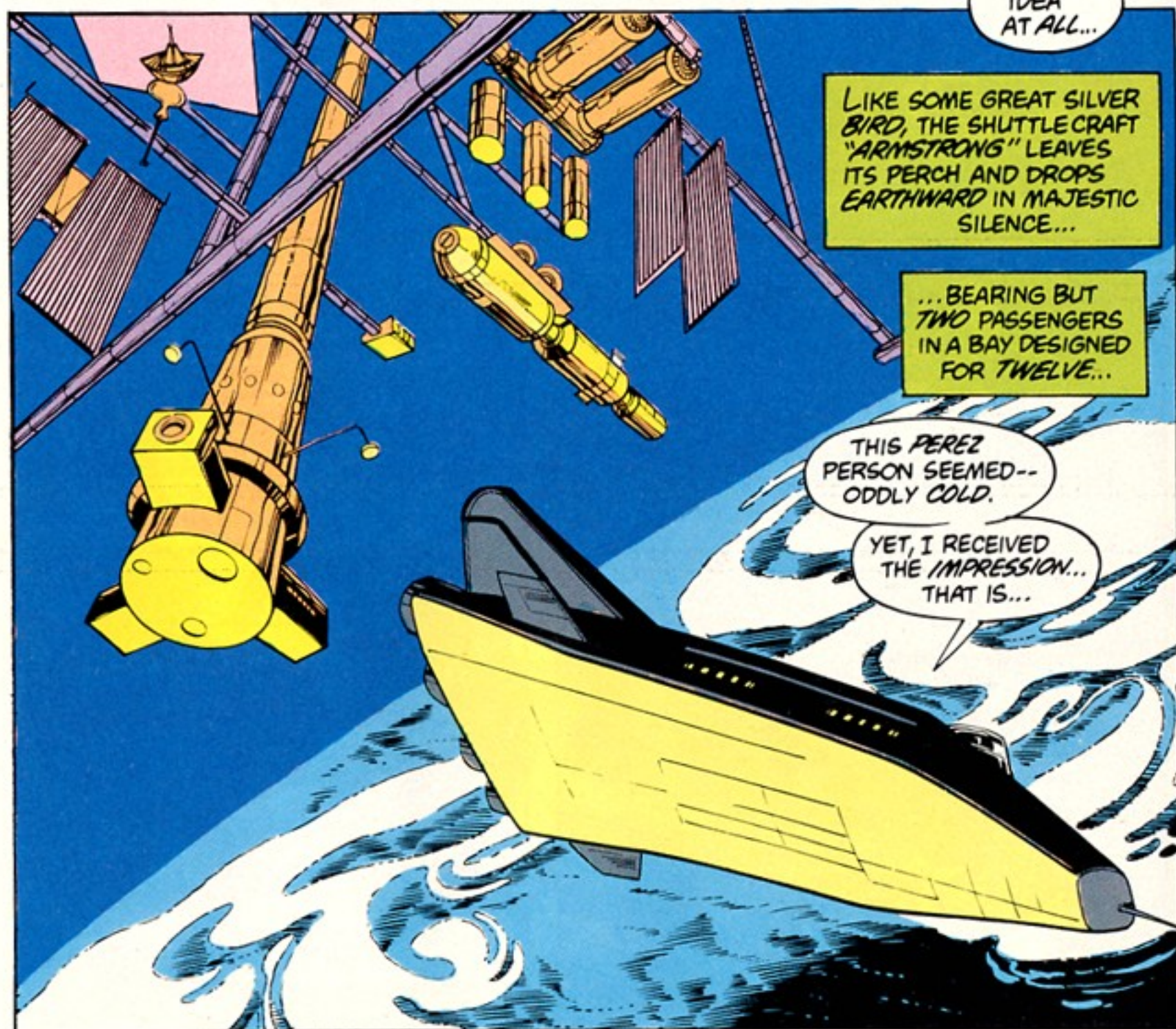
MESSAGE INCOMING:
ATTENTION: COMMANDER
MARTIN CHAMPION
DOCTOR LUCAS ORION
MESSAGE ORIGIN: ATARI
INSTITUTE, NORTHCA

APPARENTLY SOMEONE WANTS TO SPEAK WITH US.



COMMANDER CHAMPION, DOCTOR ORION, THIS IS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PEREZ FROM ATARI INSTITUTE, EARTHSIDE.

YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUIRED IMMEDIATELY FOR A CRASH PRIORITY MEETING OF THE PROJECT: MULTIVERSE TEAM.





...IT SEEMED
AS IF THE TWO OF
YOU KNEW
EACH OTHER.

IS SHE A FRIEND
OF YOURS, MARTIN?

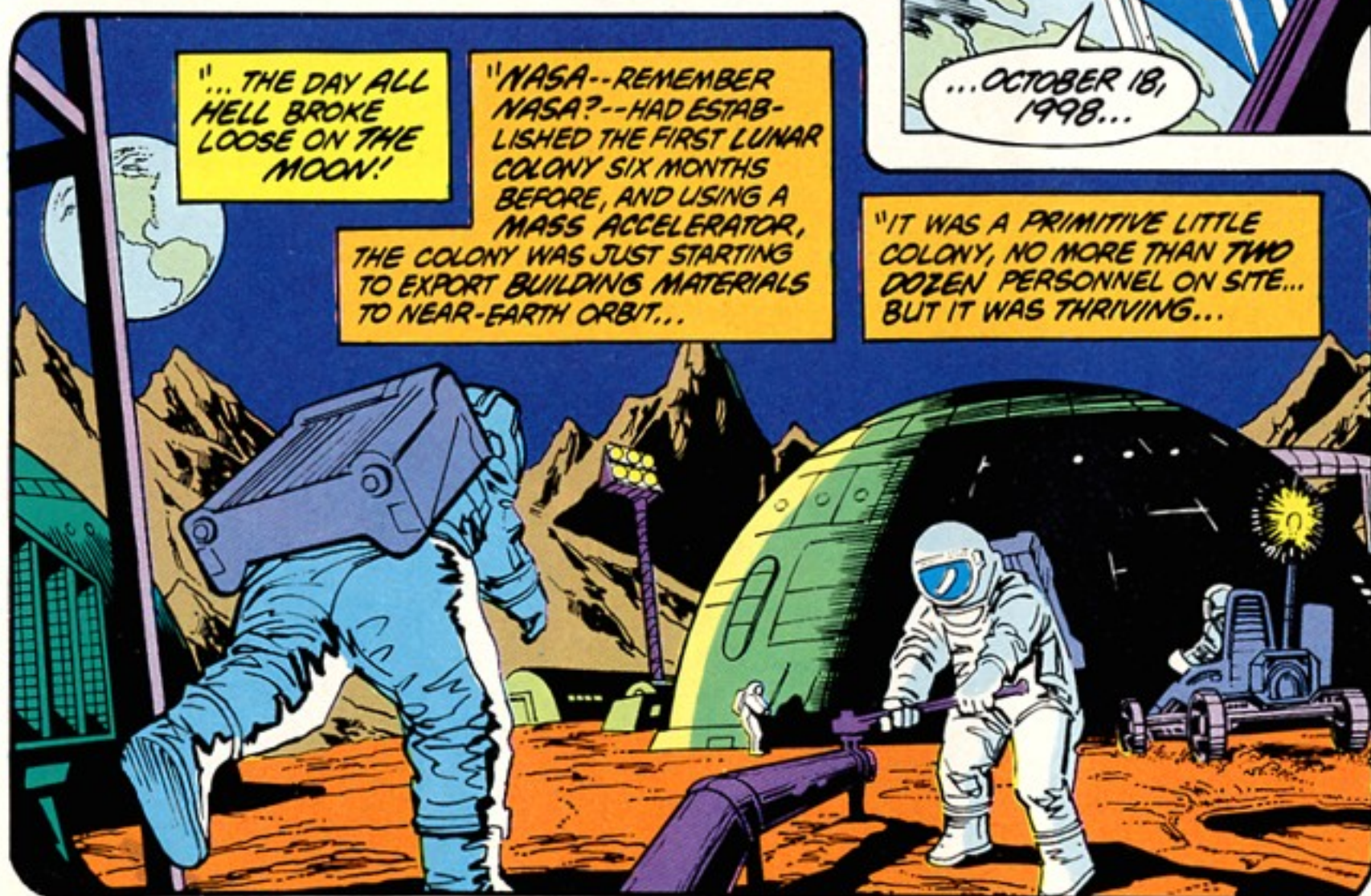
I ALWAYS THOUGHT
SO, LUCAS... BUT NOW,
I'M NOT SO SURE.

IT'S BEEN
YEARS SINCE
I SAW HER.

WE MET SEVEN
YEARS AGO, HERE
IN EARTH-ORBIT.
YOU REMEMBER
THAT DAY...



...OCTOBER 18,
1998...



"...THE DAY ALL
HELL BROKE
LOOSE ON THE
MOON!"

"NASA--REMEMBER
NASA?--HAD ESTAB-
LISHED THE FIRST LUNAR
COLONY SIX MONTHS
BEFORE, AND USING A
MASS ACCELERATOR,
THE COLONY WAS JUST STARTING
TO EXPORT BUILDING MATERIALS
TO NEAR-EARTH ORBIT..."

"IT WAS A PRIMITIVE LITTLE
COLONY, NO MORE THAN TWO
DOZEN PERSONNEL ON SITE...
BUT IT WAS THRIVING..."

"... AND SOMEONE AMONG
OUR ENEMIES DECIDED IT
WAS THRIVING TOO WELL..."

CHAPTER TWO:

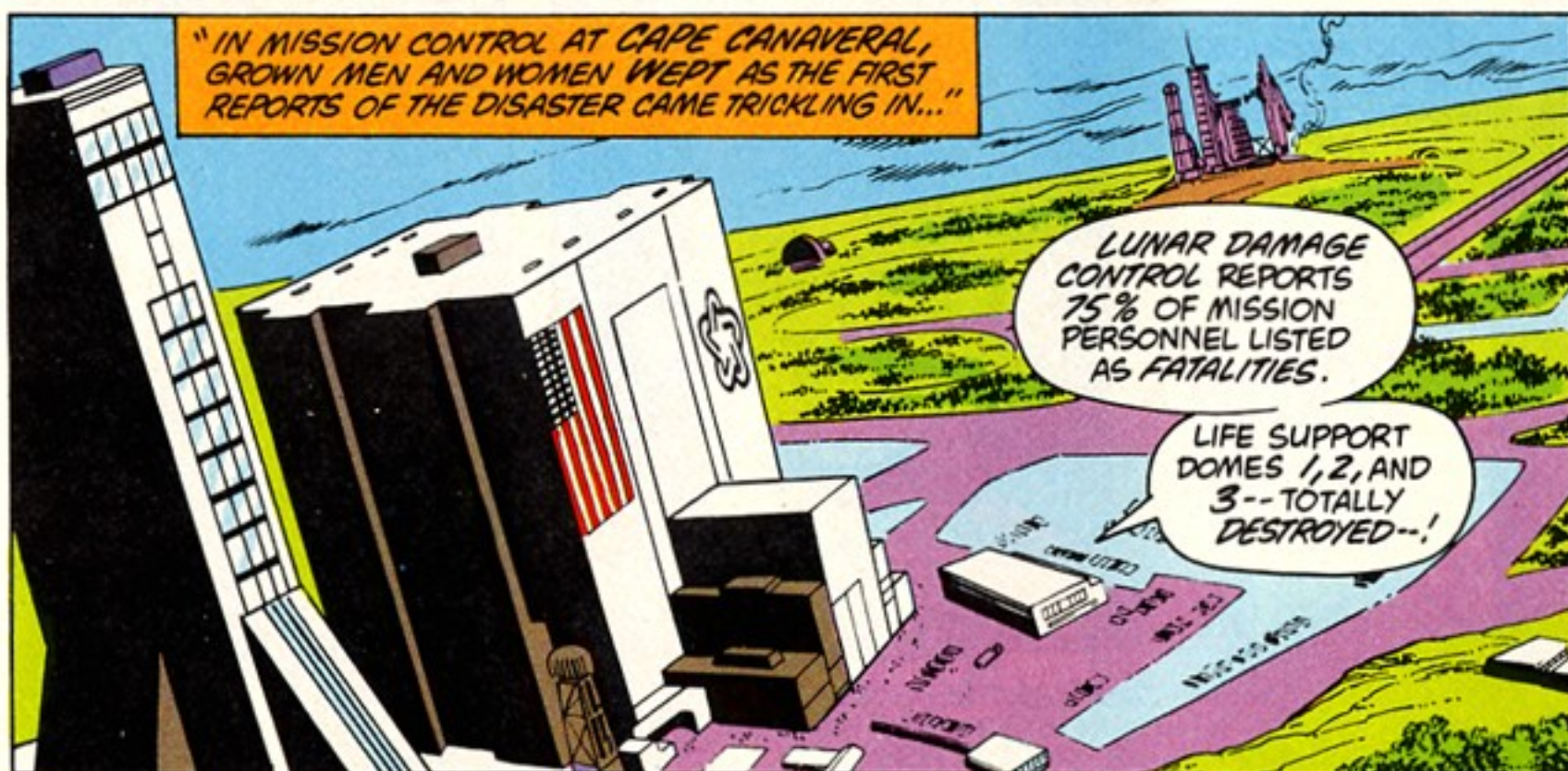
DEADLY ORBIT





"IT TOOK NASA SIX MONTHS OF BACK-BREAKING EFFORT TO ESTABLISH MAN'S FIRST TENTATIVE FOOTHOLD ON THE MOON.

"AND IT TOOK SOMEONE ELSE JUST SIX SECONDS TO KNOCK THAT FOOTHOLD LOOSE."



"IN MISSION CONTROL AT CAPE CANAVERAL, GROWN MEN AND WOMEN WEPT AS THE FIRST REPORTS OF THE DISASTER CAME TRICKLING IN..."

LUNAR DAMAGE CONTROL REPORTS 75% OF MISSION PERSONNEL LISTED AS FATALITIES.

LIFE SUPPORT DOMES 1, 2, AND 3-- TOTALLY DESTROYED--!



TELEMÉTRY SHOWS
TEN SURVIVORS--
LOCATED IN AN OUT-
SIDE BUNKER THAT
MANAGED TO ESCAPE
DESTRUCTION.

SOLAR POWER CELLS
ARE PROVIDING THEM WITH
ENERGY--THE REMAINS OF
THE HYDROPHONICS
GARDEN WILL SUPPLY FOOD
FOR TWO "LUNAR DAYS"--
ABOUT ONE MONTH,
EARTH TIME--

--BUT THEIR
SUPPLY OF AIR
IS SEVERELY
LIMITED.

THEY'LL
DIE--

--SUFFOCATE--

--UNLESS A
RESCUE MISSION
BRINGS THEM
THE AIR THEY
NEED IN THE NEXT
72 HOURS!

EH?
DIRECTOR
LASKY?

COMMANDER CHAMPION,
YOU KNOW THE SITUATION
ON THE MOON AS WELL
AS ANY OF US.

THOSE PEOPLE ARE
500,000 KILOMETERS
FROM THE CLOSEST
BREATH OF FRESH
AIR.

NASA

SOMEONE HAS
TO BRING THEM
THE AIR THEY
NEED TO
SURVIVE.

SPACE STATION ONE HAS THE NECESSARY
SUPPLIES... I'VE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE
CREW CHIEF THERE, DOCTOR PEREZ...

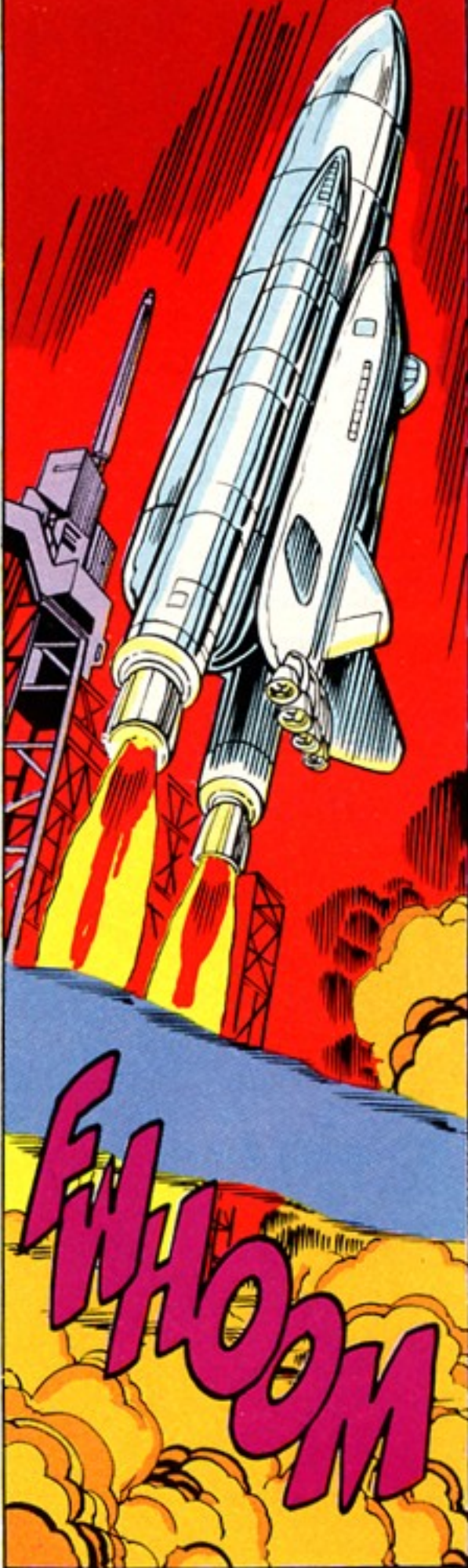
THEY'RE
READYING A
MAKESHIFT
SUPPLY SHIP.

WHAT THEY
NEED IS AN
EXPERIENCED
PILOT--

WHICH
IS ME.

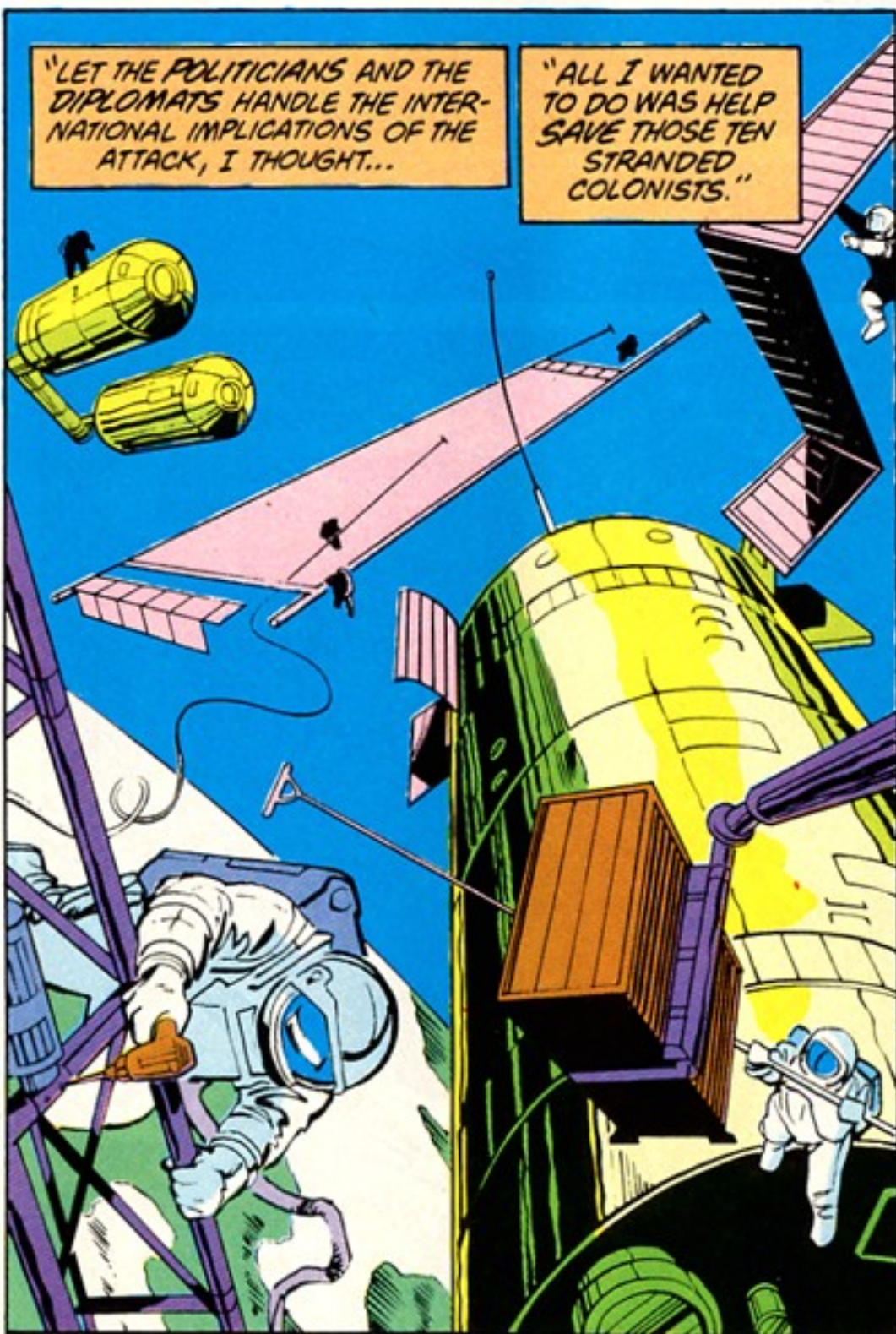
TELL
THEM I'M
ON MY WAY!

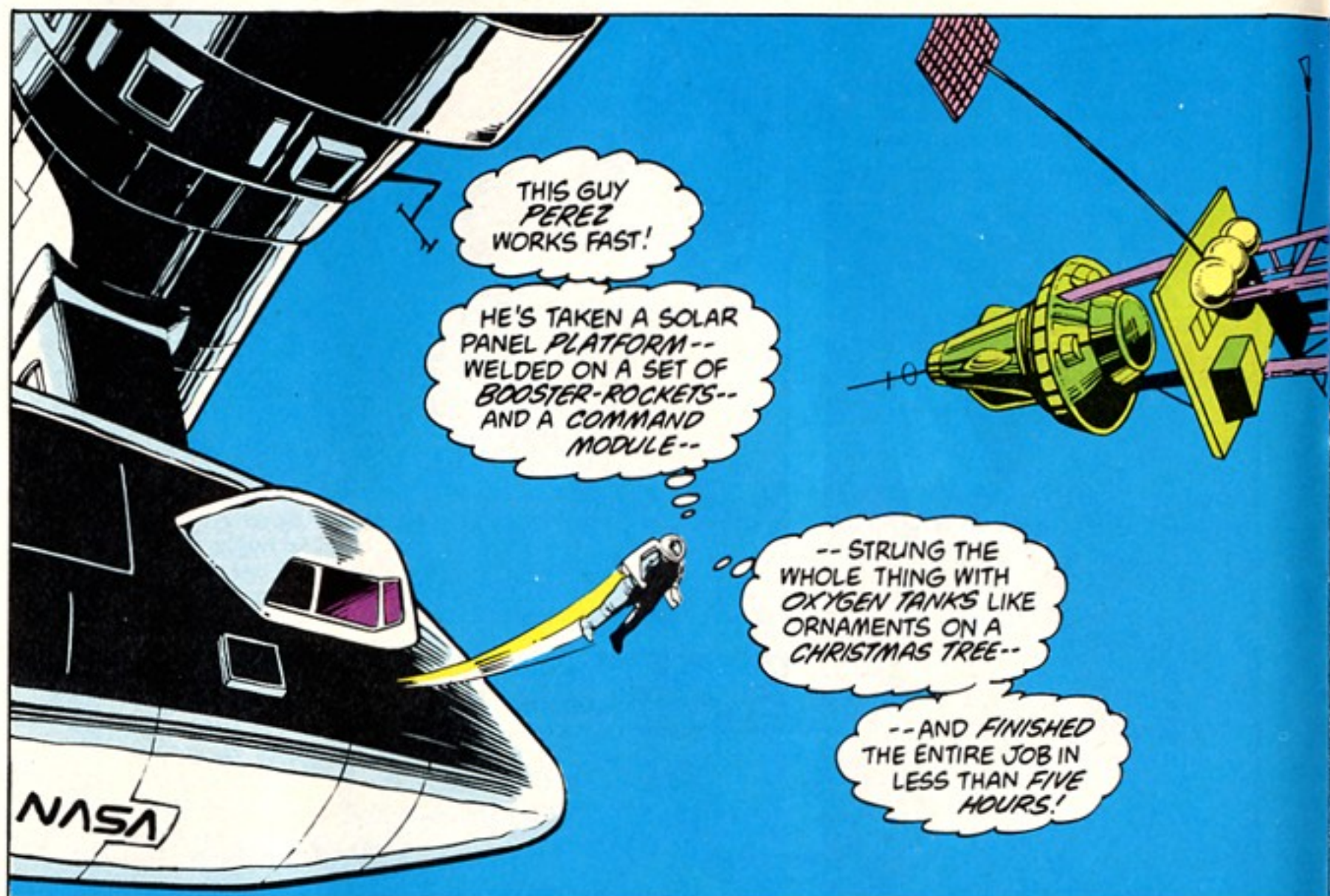
"...BUT NOBODY ELSE HAD COMMANDED A LUNAR MISSION MORE THAN TWICE."

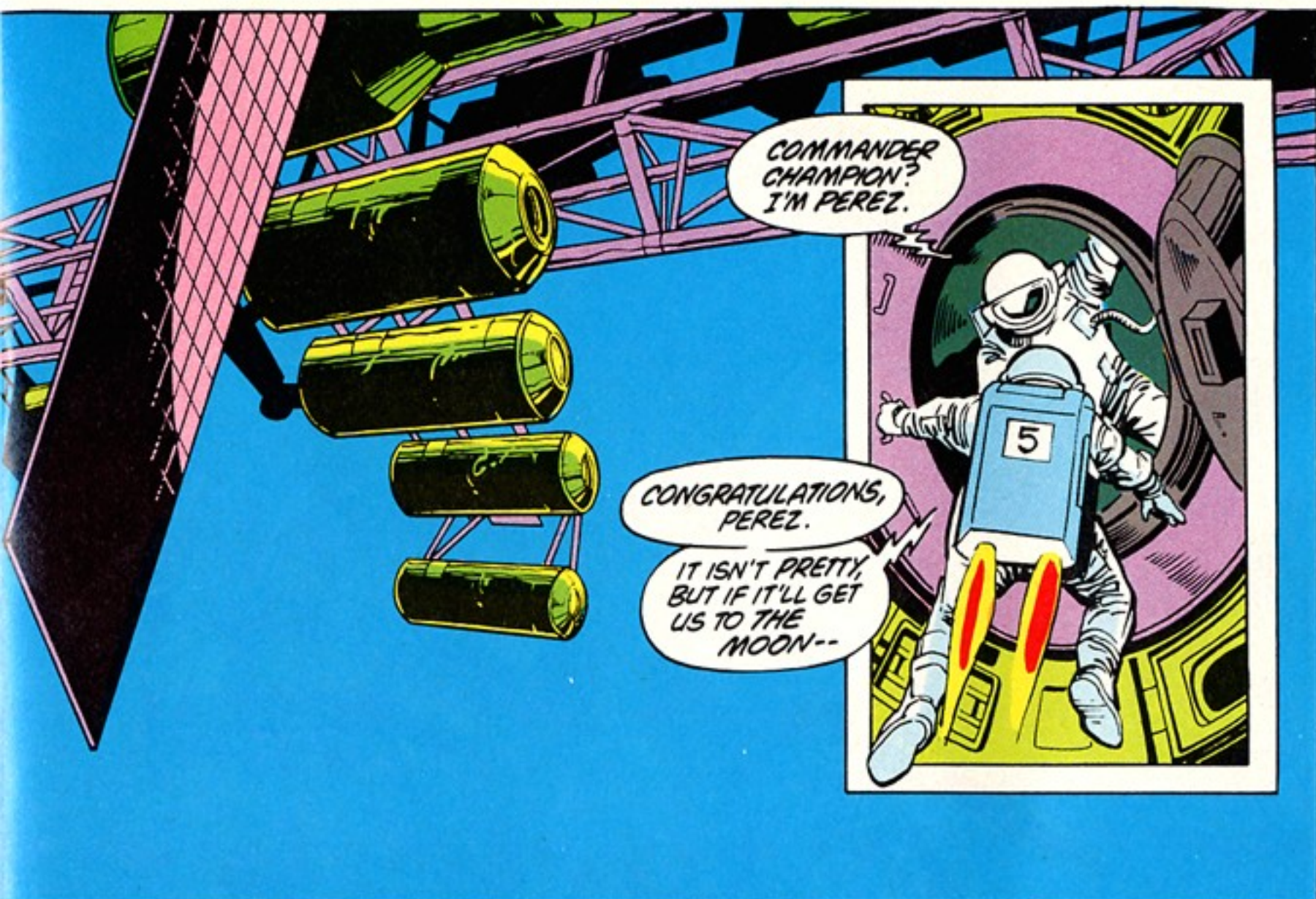


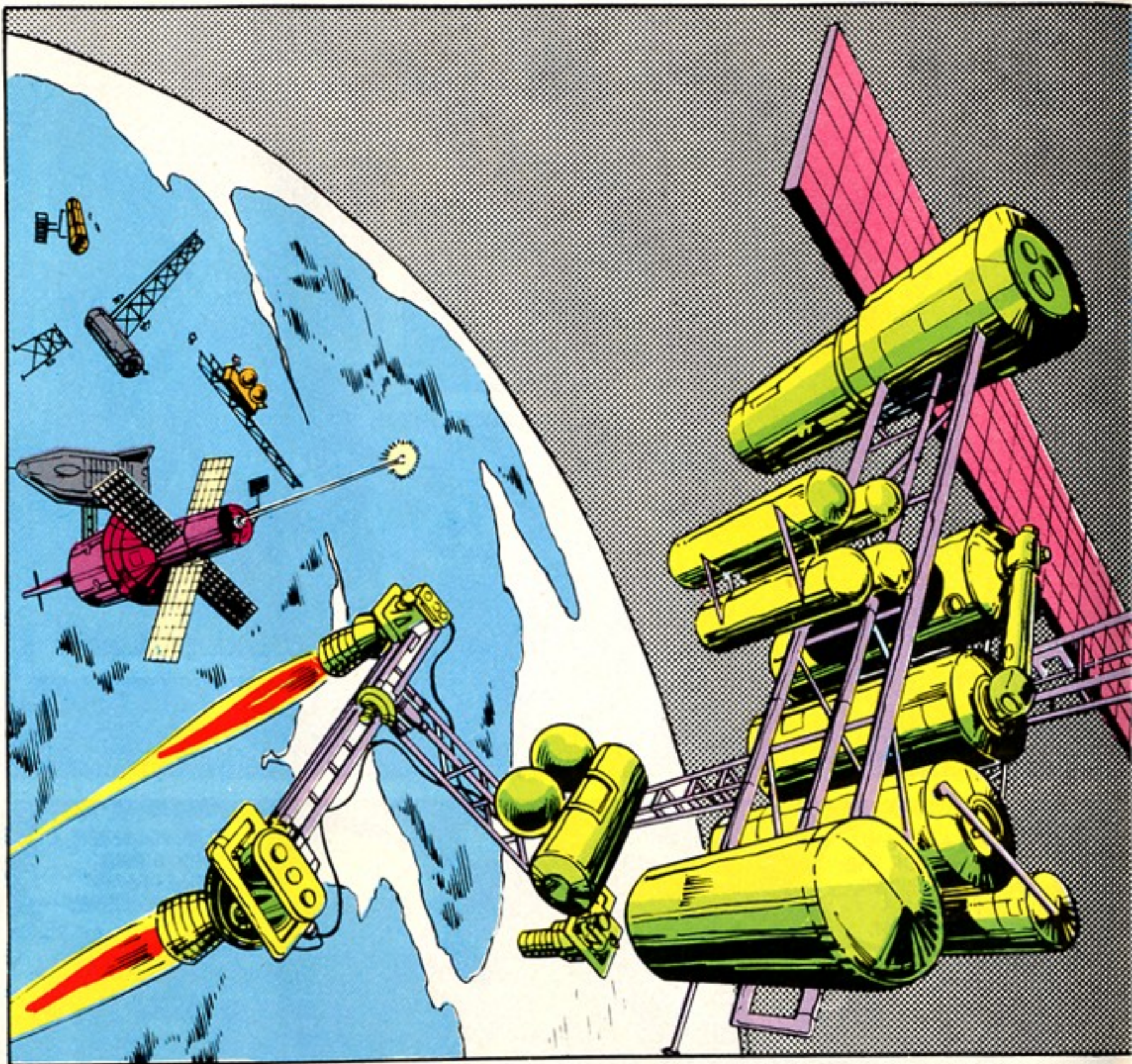
"THEY'D SUSTAINED JUST ENOUGH INTEREST, IN SPITE OF THEIR COLLAPSING ECONOMY, TO BE SPOILERS."

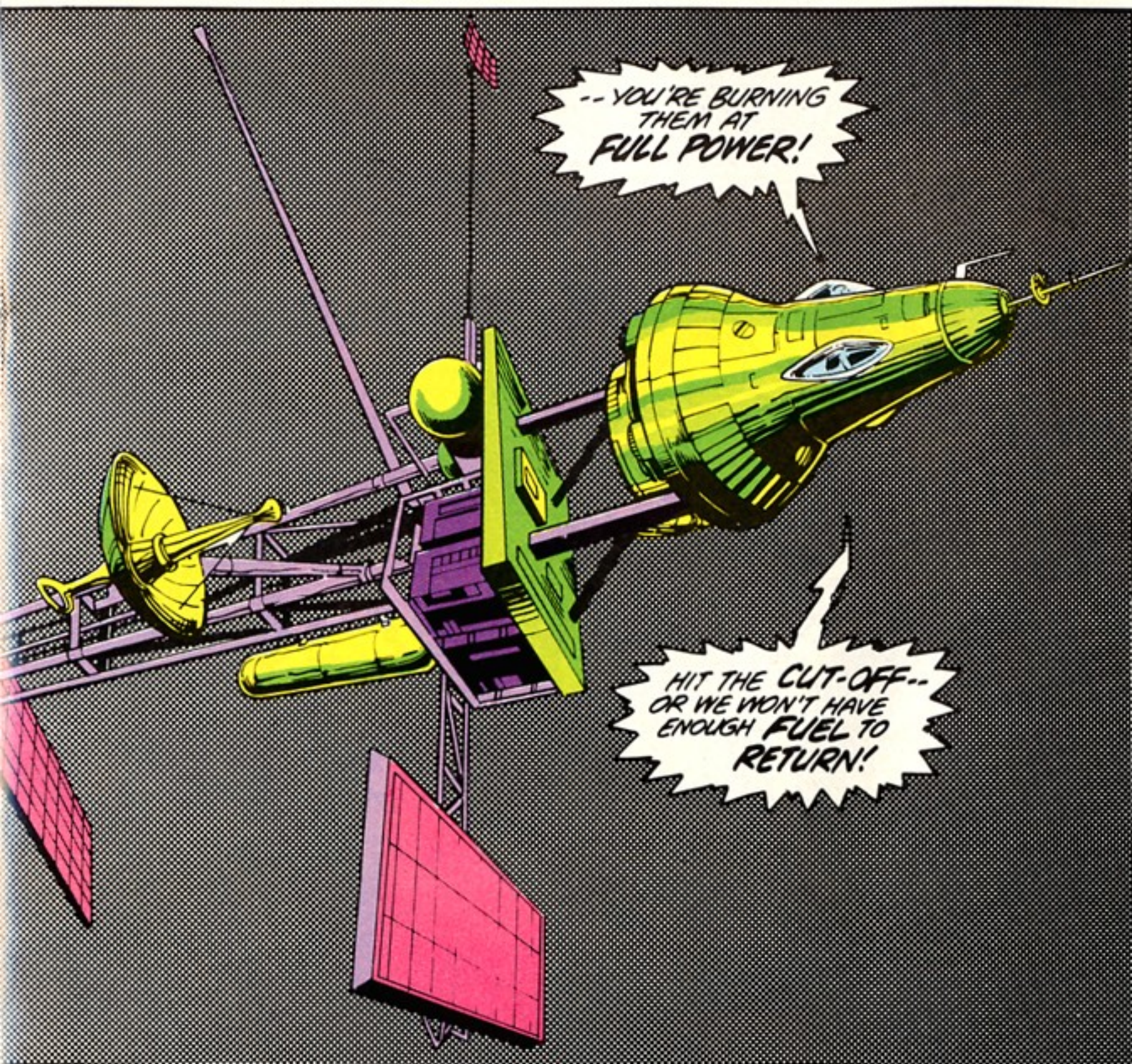
"ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS HELP SAVE THOSE TEN STRANDED COLONISTS."











-- YOU'RE BURNING
THEM AT
FULL POWER!

HIT THE CUT-OFF--
OR WE WON'T HAVE
ENOUGH FUEL TO
RETURN!



...THAT'S HOW
MUCH TIME
THE COLONISTS
HAVE BEFORE
THEIR AIR
RUNS OUT.

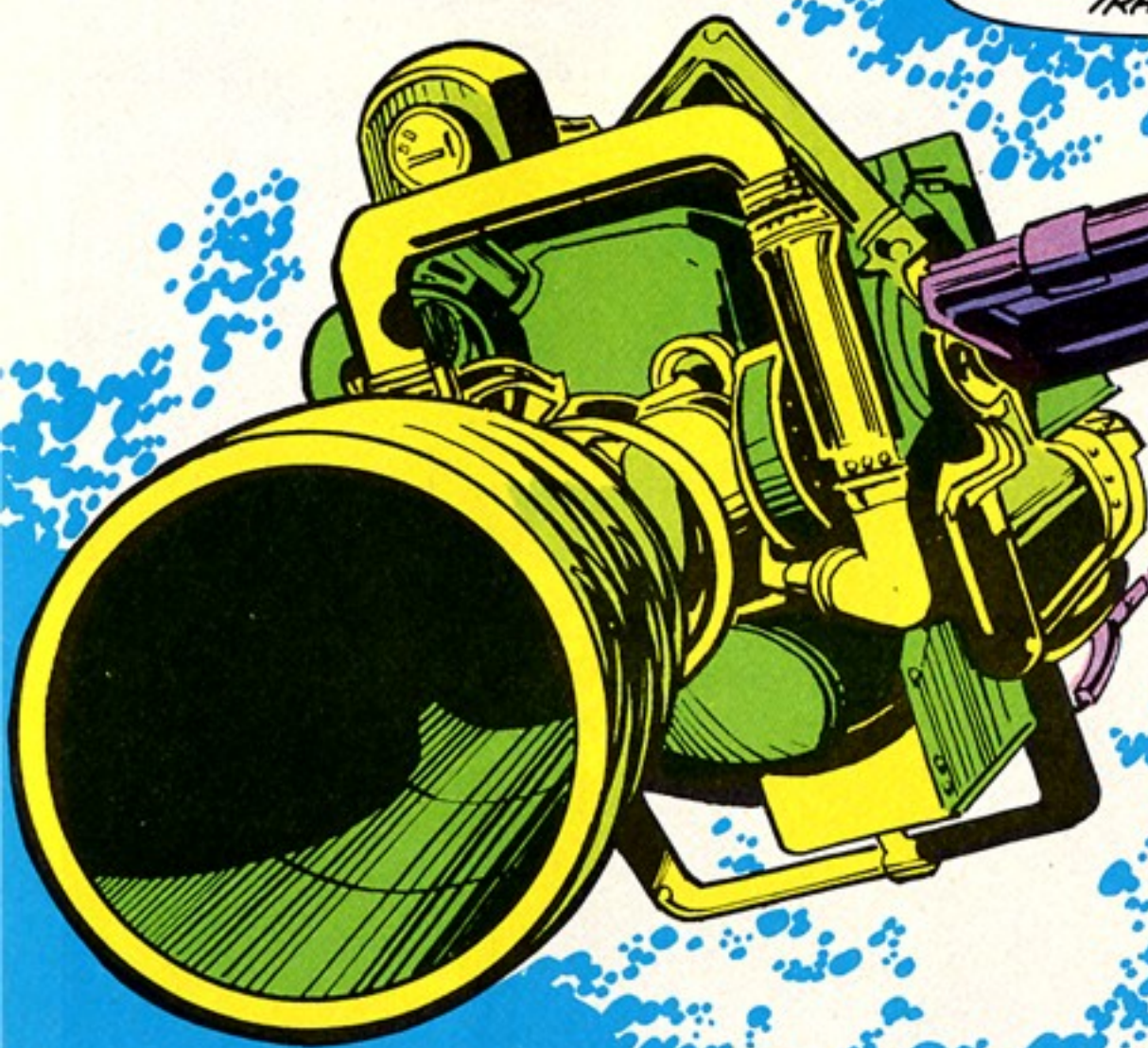
WE NEED TO
MAKE SPEED, PEREZ.

NOTHING
ELSE
MATTERS.

IF WE'RE EVEN A FEW
SECONDS LATE, WE'VE LOST
THE RACE AGAINST TIME--
AND THOSE PEOPLE UP
THERE WILL BE DEAD!

REMEMBER, PEREZ, I'VE
"FLOWN" THIS ROUTE
BEFORE--THE NAV
COMPUTER CAN PLOT
OUR COURSE AS EASILY
IN FLIGHT AS BEFORE
FLIGHT--

--AND RIGHT NOW,
TIME IS MORE PRECIOUS
THAN A PRE-PLANNED
TRAJECTORY!



WE'LL USE THE
MOON'S GRAVITY
TO SLOW US
DOWN.

MAYBE WE'LL
HAVE A HARD
LANDING--AND
MAYBE WE'LL
FAIL--

--BUT WE'LL
HAVE GIVEN IT
OUR BEST
SHOT.

AND,
PEREZ--

MY NAME IS
MARTIN.



BUT, CHAMPION,
WITHOUT THE NECESSARY
FUEL--

--HOW CAN WE
BRAKE OUR
VELOCITY TO
LAND?

...

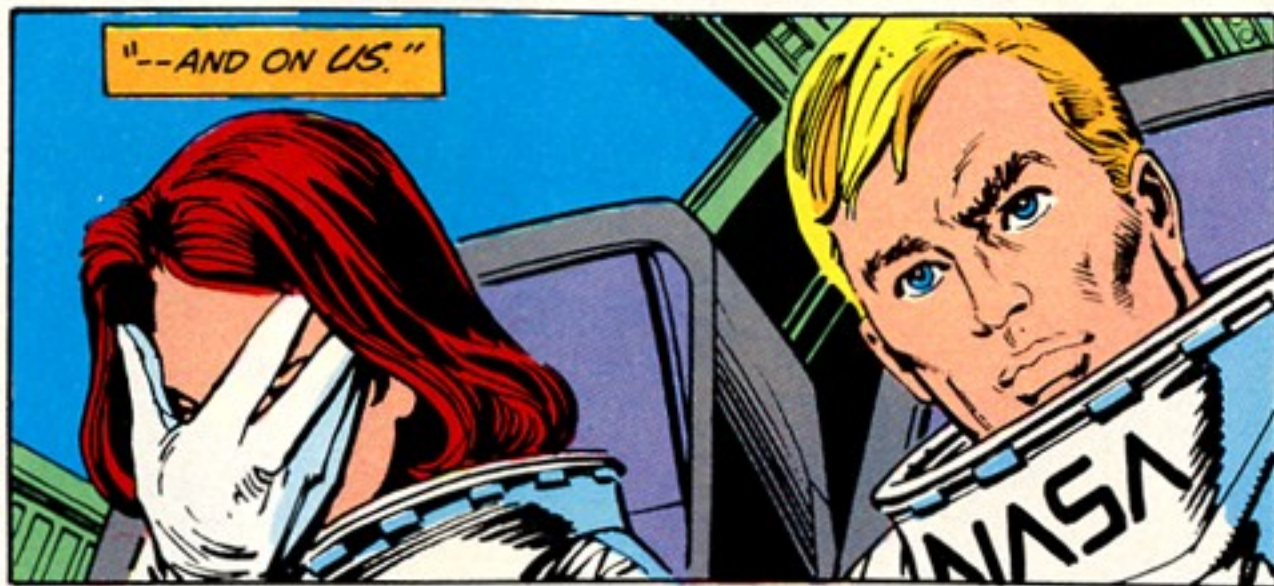
LYDIA.

APOLOGY
ACCEPTED.

"MISSION CONTROL RELAYED REPORTS FROM THE COLONY... THINGS WERE GETTING BAD AS THE AIR TURNED FOUL. FIGHTS BROKE OUT ... A MAN WENT SCREAMING MAD FROM CLAUSTROPHOBIA... AND EVERY HOUR THAT PASSED INCREASED THE PRESSURE ON THEM--



"--AND ON US."



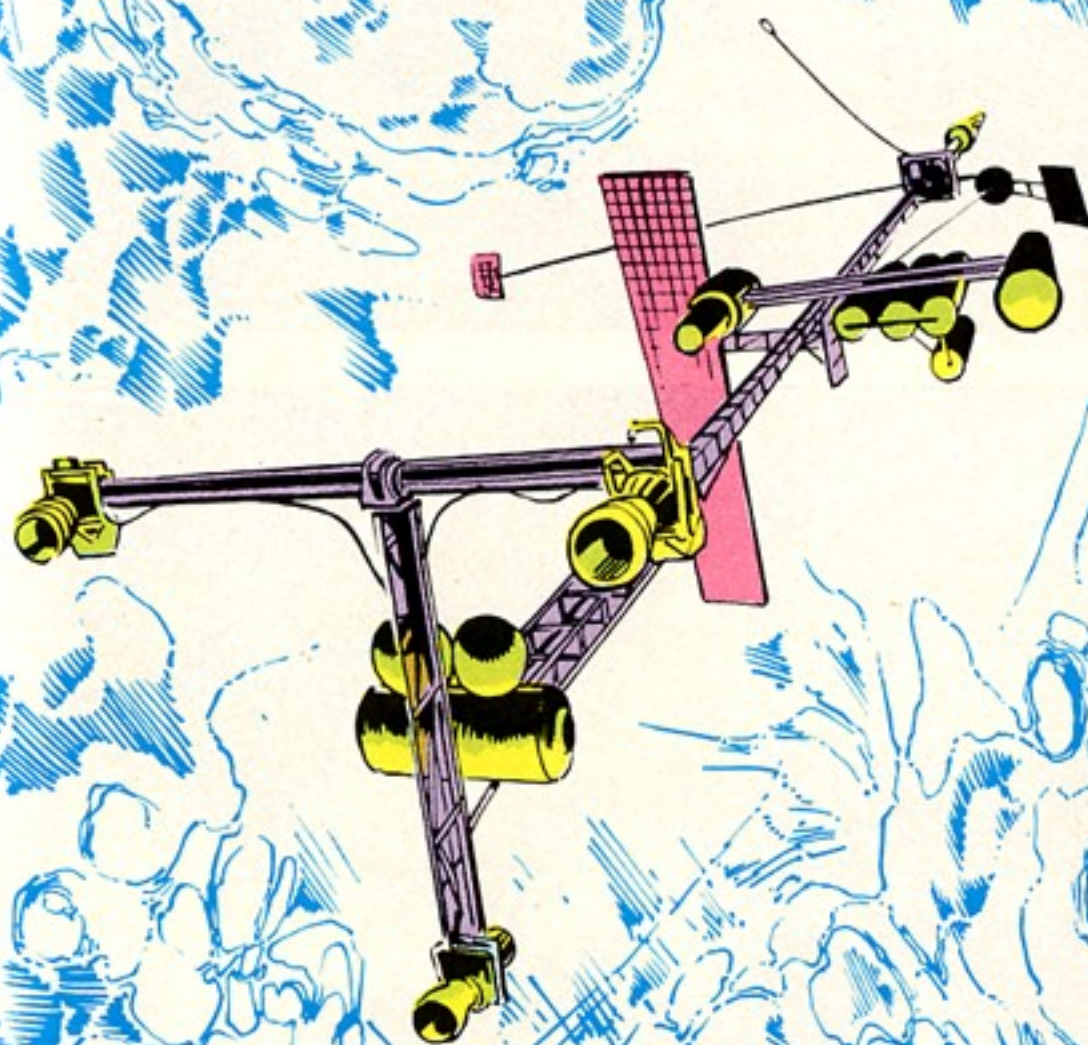
"THEN, ON THE MORNING
OF THE THIRD DAY, WE
LOOKED THROUGH THE
VIEWPORT--

"--AND THERE
IT WAS."

"LUNAR RESCUE
TEAM, THIS IS MISSION
CONTROL. WE'VE JUST
LOST RADIO CONTACT
WITH LUNAR BASE."

"COMPUTER PROJECTIONS
INDICATE--A 95%
PROBABILITY--THAT IT'S
ALL OVER."

"YOUR MISSION
IS SCRUBBED.
STAY IN LUNAR ORBIT
UNTIL A PROPER
RELIEF SHIP CAN--"



NEGATIVE,
MISSION CONTROL

WE DIDN'T COME
THIS FAR TO QUIT
WITHOUT TRYING
FOR A
TOUCHDOWN!

"CHAMPION! THIS IS
DIRECTOR LASKY! DON'T BE
A FOOL-- RISKING YOUR
LIVES WHEN THERE'S SO
LITTLE HOPE!"

"I'M ORDERING
YOU TO--
SKWAARK!"

SO MUCH
FOR MISSION
CONTROL.

WE CAN'T
HEAR THEM
AS WE SWING
AROUND LUNAR
DARKSIDE.

ANY
RESERVATIONS,
PEREZ?

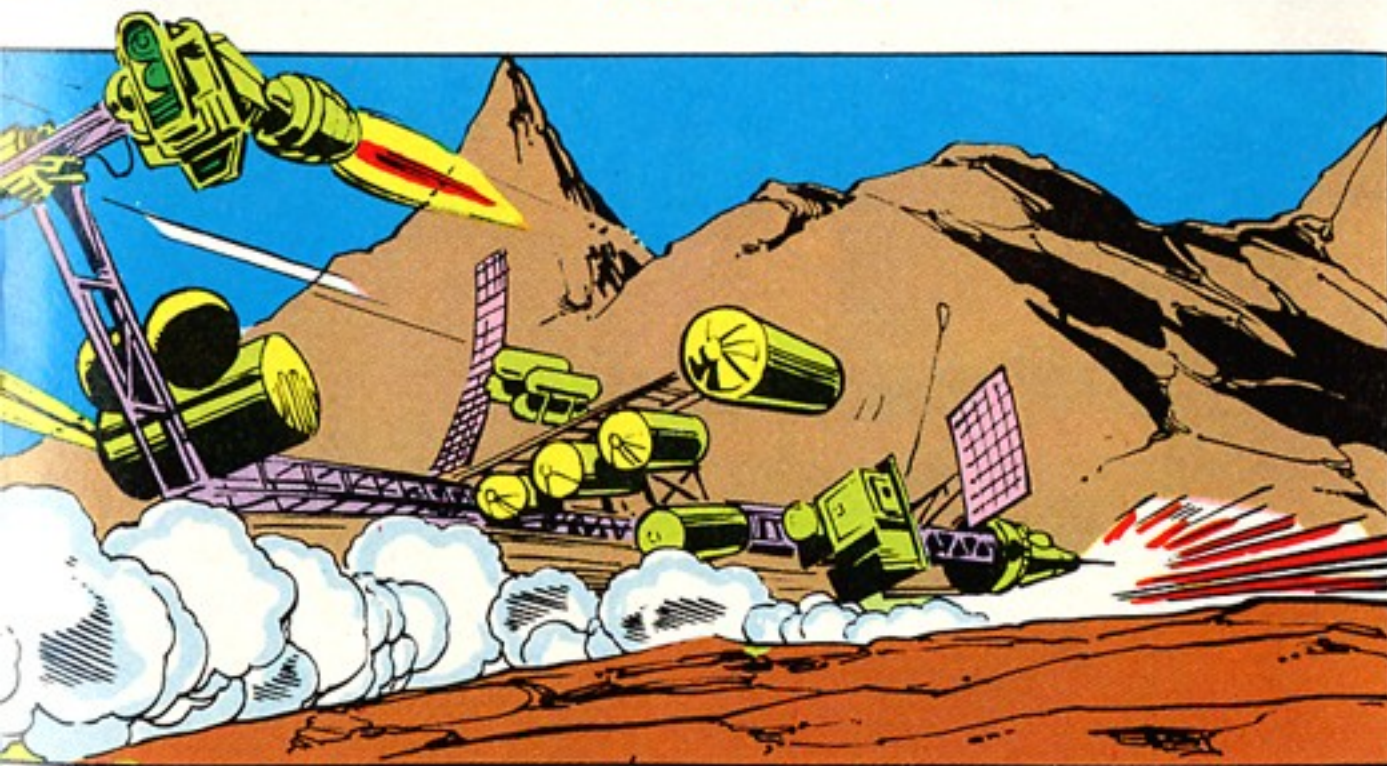
NONE. YOU'RE
PILOTING
THIS JUNKPILE,
CHAMPION.


GO FOR IT!

"--IT WAS TIME
TO BRING THAT
BABY DOWN!"

"ONCE... TWICE... HALF A DOZEN TIMES, WE CIRCLED THE MOON, AND WITH EACH ORBIT WE DROPPED LOWER, SLOWING OUR DESCENT WITH A COMBINATION OF GRAVITY AND DYING RETRO-ROCKETS..."

"FINALLY, WE WERE TOO LOW TO MAKE ANOTHER ORBIT... AND, LIKE IT OR NOT--"





"I DON'T THINK
MY HEART STOPPED--

--BUT IT SURE
AS HELL MISSED
A BEAT!"



CHAMPION, YOU'RE CERTIFIABLE--BUT YOU'RE ALSO ONE HECK OF A PILOT.

PEREZ, AS A HERO OF MINE ONCE SAID--

"THIS MAY BE THE START OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP."

ONCE I GET LOOSE OF THESE STRAPS, I'M GOING TO KISS YOU.

AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT AT THE TIME.

A FEW DAYS LATER--WHILE WE WERE WAITING WITH THE LUNAR COLONISTS FOR A RESCUE SHIP TO ARRIVE--THE WAR STARTED.

NASA MANAGED TO PROVE WHICH OF OUR ENEMIES TRIED TO WIPE OUT THAT MOON BASE-- --AND THAT LED TO A WORLD-WIDE SHOOT-OUT!

THE EARTH LYDIA AND I CAME HOME TO WASN'T THE SAME ONE WE'D LEFT.

WE LOST TRACK OF EACH OTHER AFTERWARD, DURING THE BREAK-UP... AND LIKE SOME OTHERS, WE BOTH ENDED UP WORKING FOR THE ATARI INSTITUTE, WHEN THINGS FINALLY SETTLED DOWN.

IT'S BEEN SEVEN YEARS SINCE I LAST SAW HER... WHY WAS SHE SO COLD?

CHAPTER THREE: FINAL APPROACH

"ATARI CONTROL,
WE'RE IN THE
GLIDE PATH."

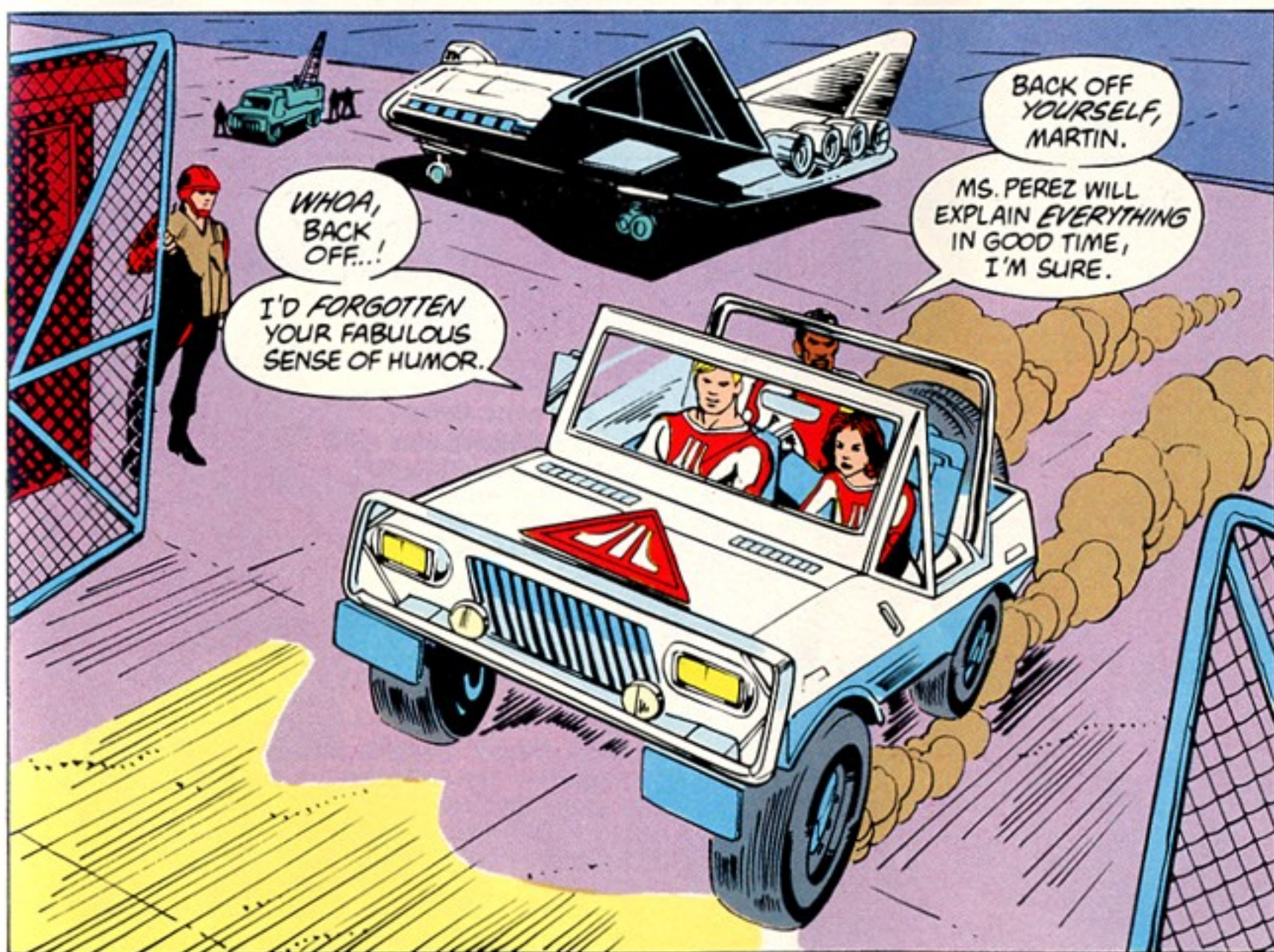
"ESTIMATED
TOUCHDOWN AT
2202:00:00."

"ROGER,
SHUTTLE EIGHT.
YOU'RE RIGHT
ON THE BUTTON."

"INFORM YOUR PASSENGERS
THAT ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
PEREZ WILL BE ON THE PAD
WITH A TRANSPORT VEHICLE
WHEN THEY DEBARK."

"ATARI
CONTROL--
OUT!"







IT'S NOT MY
PLACE TO
EXPLAIN,
DOCTOR.

THAT'S UP TO THE
DIRECTOR-- HE'S BEEN IN
COMMAND OF PROJECT:
MULTIVERSE FROM THE
BEGINNING. I WAS ONLY
BROUGHT IN ON THE DESIGN
END SIX MONTHS AGO.

BUT I CAN TELL YOU
THIS... SINCE THE WAR, WE'VE
SEARCHED FOR A SOLUTION
TO THE WORLD FOOD
SHORTAGE...

...AND WITH PROJECT:
MULTIVERSE, WE MAY HAVE
FOUND THE SOLUTION TO
THAT, AND A WHOLE HOST
OF OTHER POTENTIAL
DISASTERS!

LUCAS ORION LISTENS WITH ONLY HALF-
ATTENTION: THE MENTION OF THE WAR, AND
THE SIGHT OF THE RUNNERS WHO JOG HOME-
WARD ALONG THIS ABANDONED STRETCH OF
HIGHWAY, HAVE STIRRED MEMORIES HE
THOUGHT WERE DEEPLY BURIED...

... MEMORIES OF A DAY SIX YEARS IN THE PAST, DURING THE DARK MONTHS OF THE BREAK-UP, THAT PROLONGED PERIOD OF WORLD-WIDE CHAOS WHICH FOLLOWED ON THE HEELS OF THE WAR...

RUNNING FIGURES:

THE RUNNERS OF HIS MEMORY WERE REFUGEES, FLEEING A BLOODY CIVIL WAR IN THE HEART OF A ONCE-STABLE AFRICAN STATE.

LUCAS ORION WAS A MEDIC ATTACHED TO A UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCE... THE LAST SUCH "PEACE-KEEPING" FORCE THAT DYING ORGANIZATION WAS EVER TO SPONSOR.

DEAR HEAVEN--THIS IS THE FOURTH BURNING VILLAGE WE'VE PASSED THIS MORNING!

WHEN IS THE FIGHTING GOING TO STOP?

WHEN THE LAST MAN DROPS DEAD, DOC, AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS--

HE DIDN'T EVEN
FEEL THE BLAST.

AFTERWARD, HE
REALIZED THEIR
JEEP MUST
HAVE BEEN
STRUCK BY
A MORTAR
SHELL.

THE CONCUSSION LIFTED HIM
INTO THE AIR LIKE A STUFFED
TOY... BUT SOMEHOW, HE
SURVIVED WITHOUT A SCRATCH.

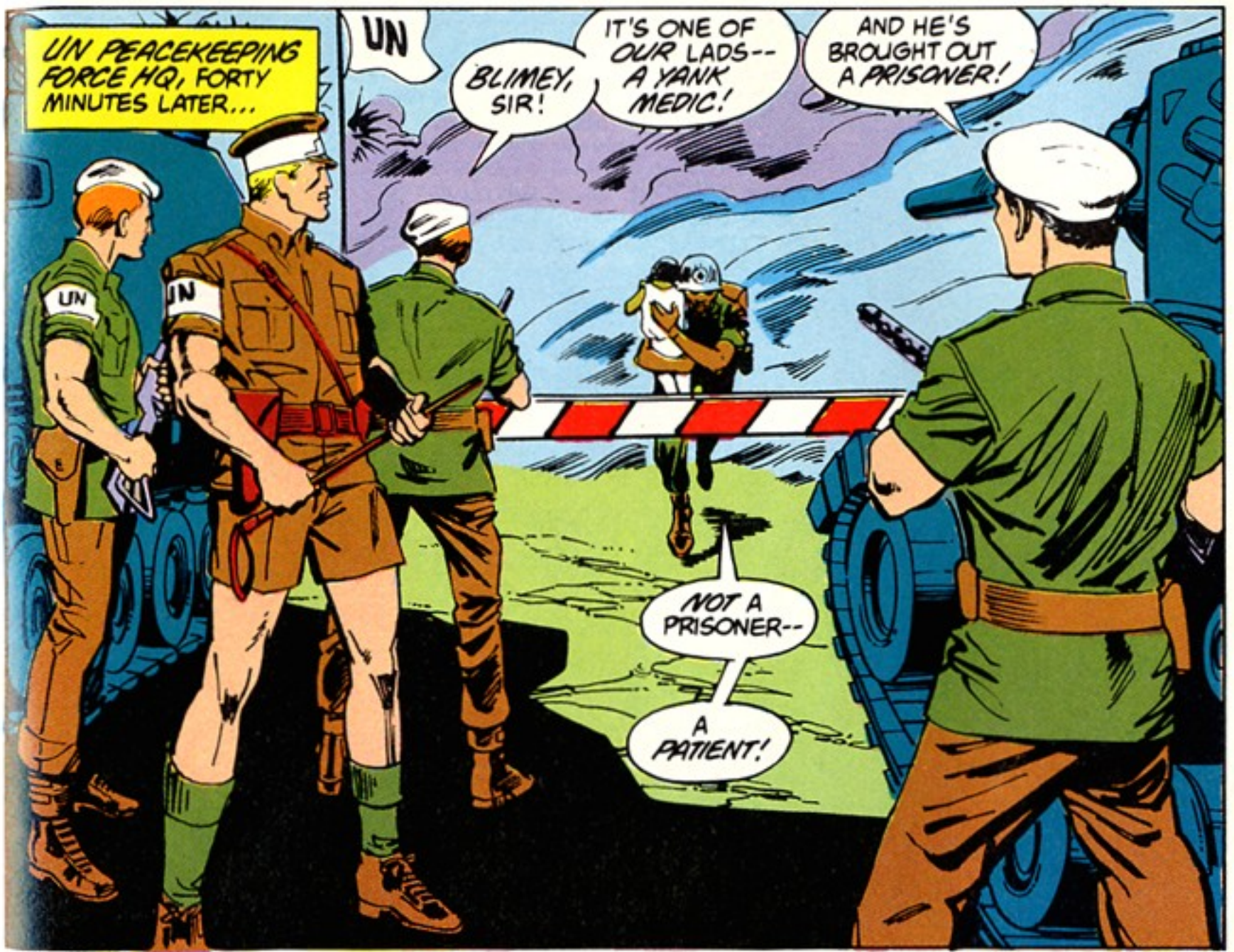
HIS DRIVER
WASN'T AS
LUCKY...

LUCAS MIGHT HAVE STAYED THERE,
HUNCHED OVER IN SHOCK, WITH-
DRAWING FURTHER AND FURTHER
FROM REALITY... BUT THEN HE
HEARD A SMALL VOICE, CRYING...

WAAAA







UN PEACEKEEPING
FORCE HQ, FORTY
MINUTES LATER...

UN

BLIMEY,
SIR!

IT'S ONE OF
OUR LADS--
A YANK
MEDIC!

AND HE'S
BROUGHT OUT
A PRISONER!

NOT A
PRISONER--

A
PATIENT!



I SAY, OLD CHAP,
NO NEED FOR
HOSTILITY.

WE'RE ALL
FIGHTING ON THE
SAME SIDE,
AFTER ALL.

REALLY,
SIR?

I WONDER IF
ANYONE WHO'S
FIGHTING IS ON
MY SIDE.

THIS KIND OF WAR
DOESN'T HAVE "SIDES"...
NO VICTORS...

... ONLY
VICTIMS!

PERHAPS IT'S FATE
THAT THIS CAME
TODAY.

A NEW BEGINNING
...NEW HOPES,
NEW DREAMS...

UNITED NATIONS
SPECIAL COMMUNIQUE
TO: DR. LUCAS ORION
c/o UN FORCE X320
FROM: ATARI
INSTITUTE
SUNNYVALE, CA.

DEAR DR. ORION:
BECAUSE OF EXPANDED RESPONSIBILITIES
DUE TO THE BREAK-UP OF TRADITIONAL
POLITICAL-NATION-STATES, ATARI INSTITUTE
IS ASSUMING CONTROL OF NASA AND THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE. STOP. YOUR
OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC RECORD LEADS
US TO OFFER YOU A POSITION AS
MEDICAL RESEARCH

...PERHAPS EVEN
A NEW FUTURE FOR
ALL HUMANKIND.

ATARI
INSTITUTE
WANTS TO MAKE
ME THEIR
DIRECTOR OF
MEDICAL
RESEARCH.

I COULD
LEAVE ALL
THIS BEHIND.

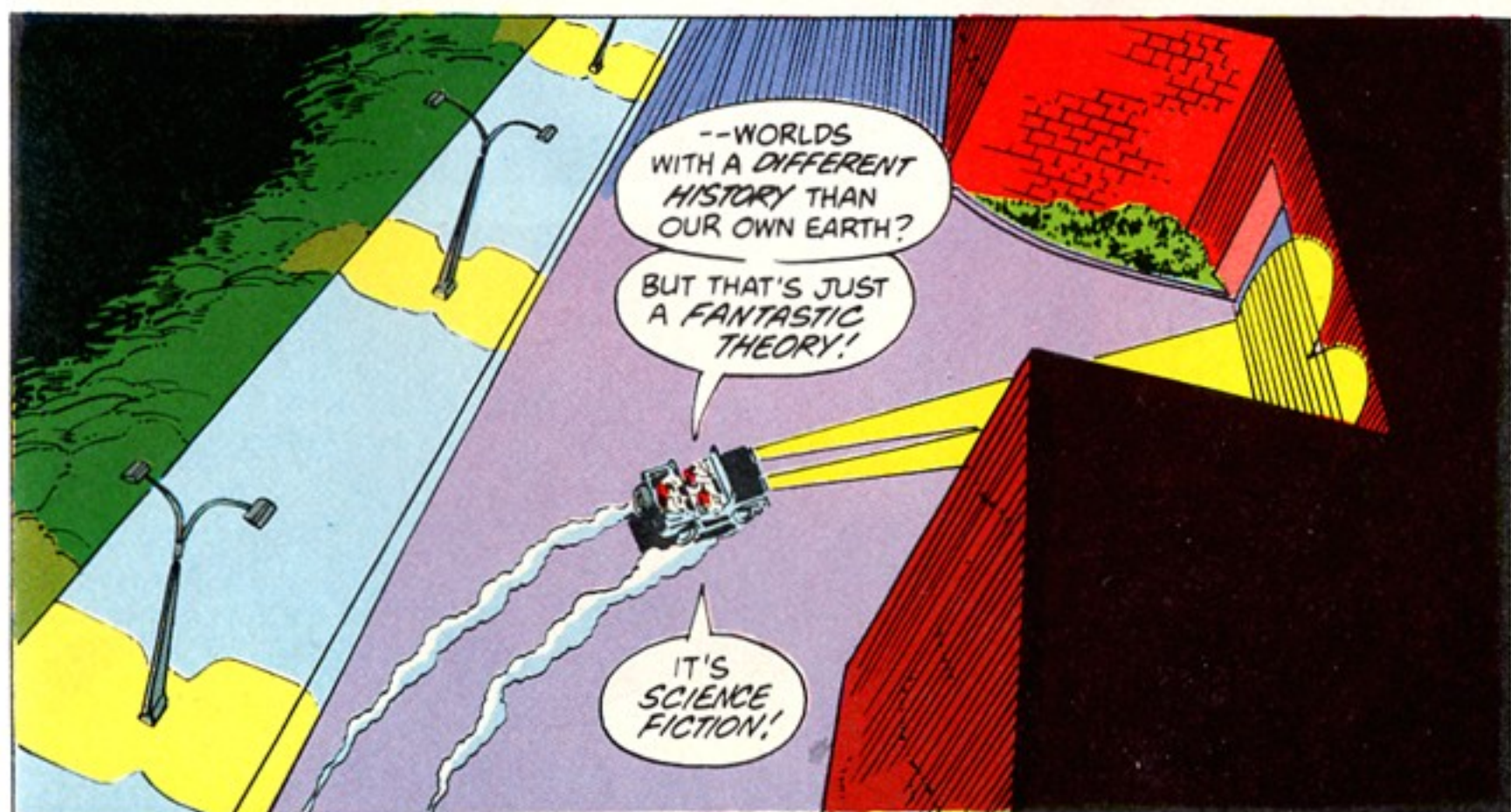
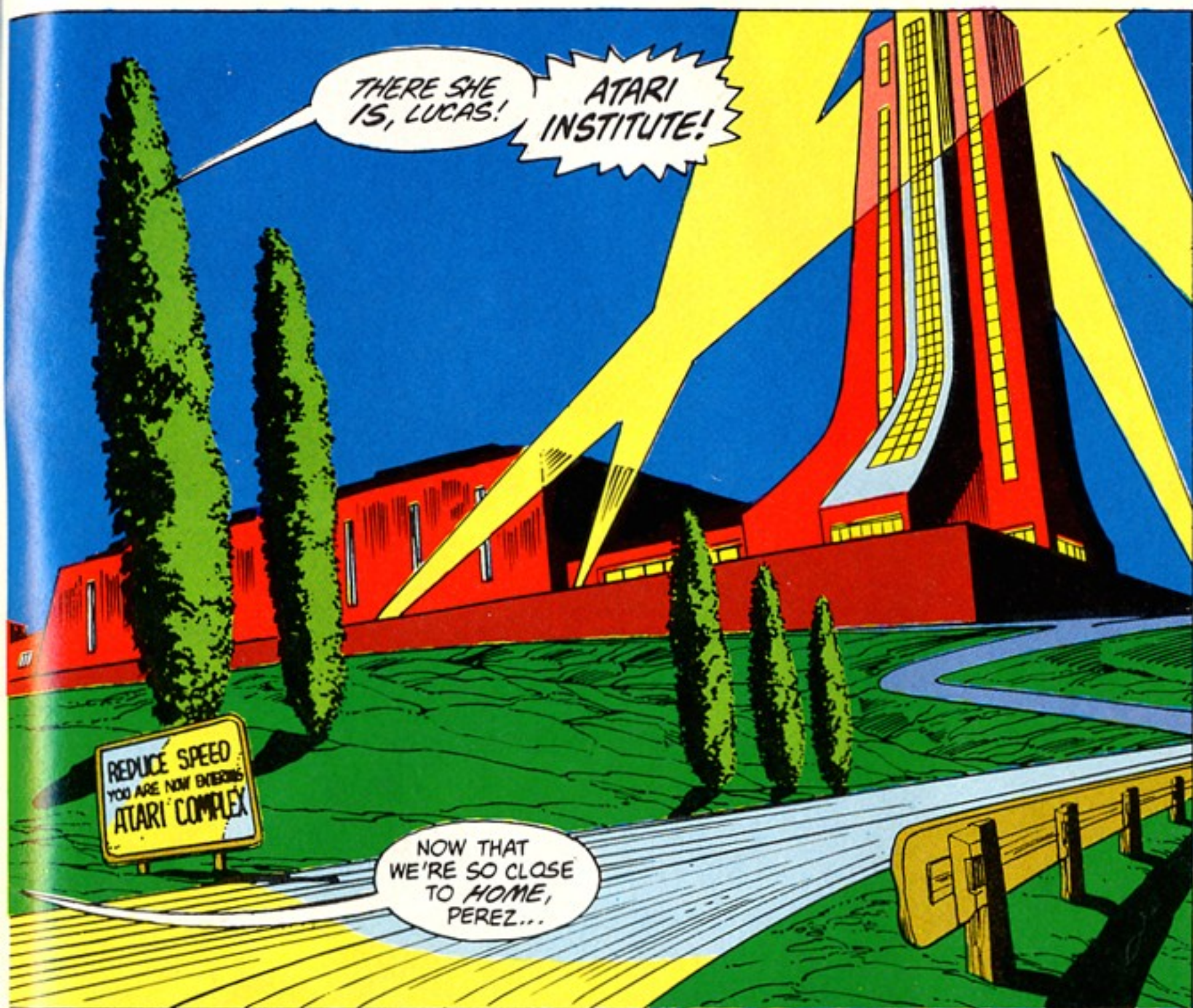
AND THAT'S
WHAT I WANT,
ISN'T IT?

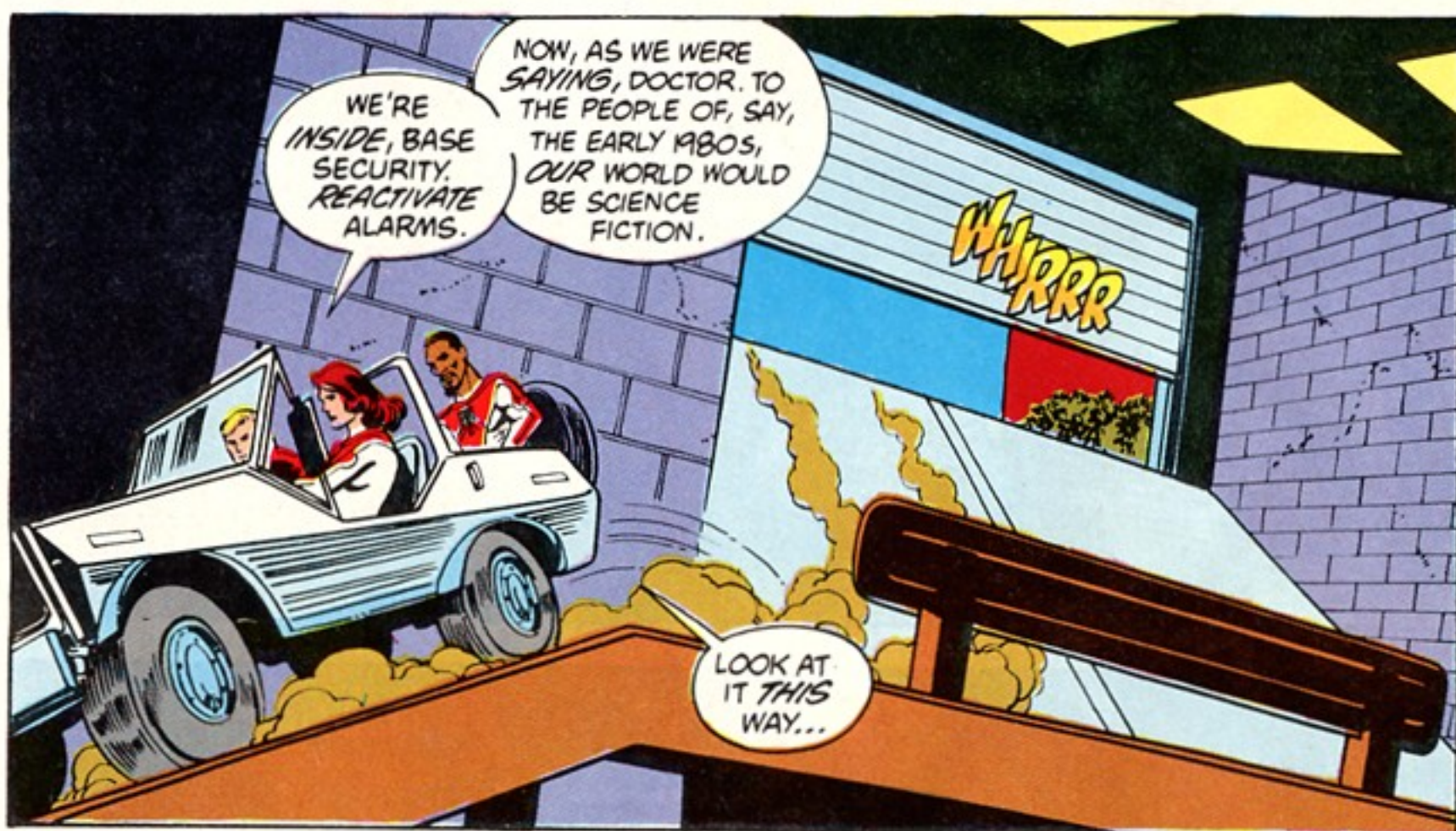
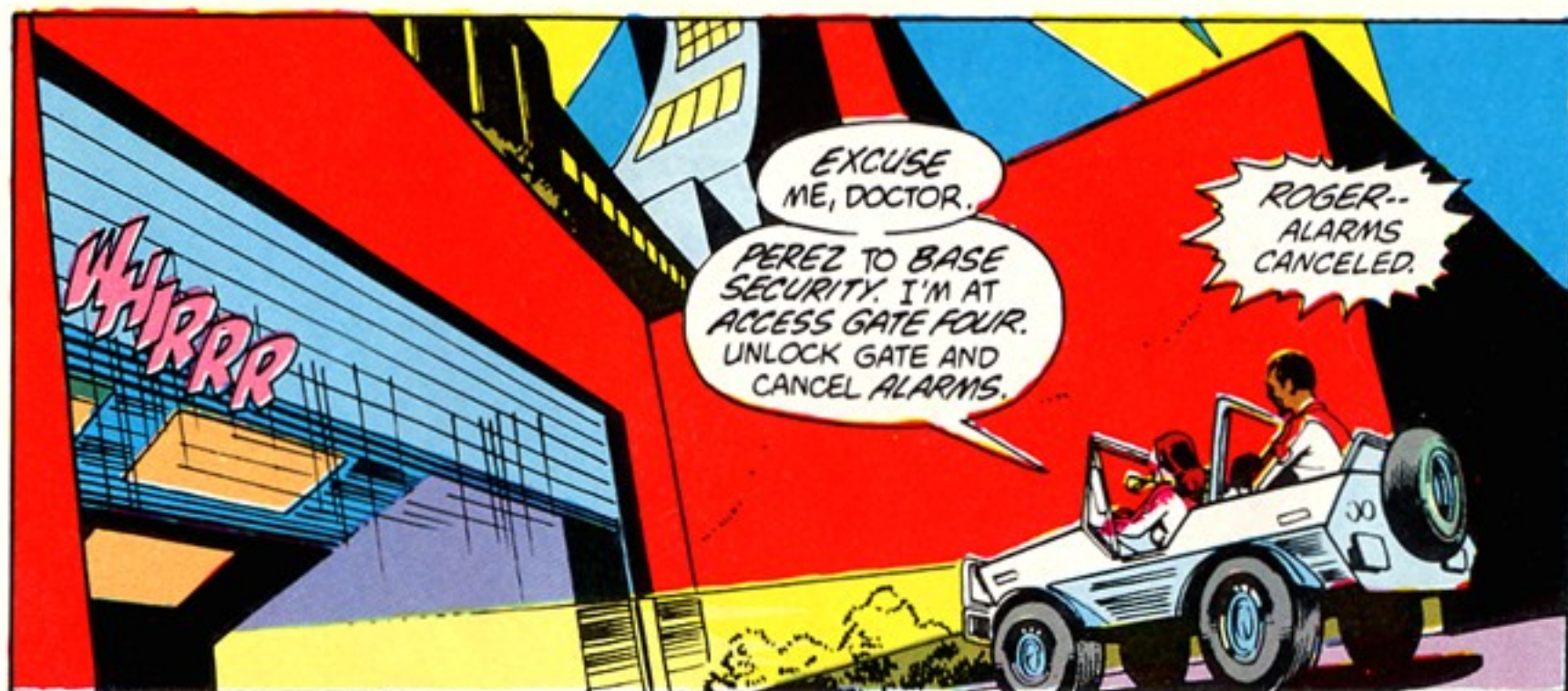
ISN'T
IT...?

THE STARS HAD
NO ANSWER FOR
LUCAS ORION,
THAT NIGHT...

...AND NOW, SIX
YEARS LATER,
THEY ARE AS
CRYPTIC AS
EVER.









SO IT'S TO BE AS
EASY AS THIS,
IS IT?

I'D ALMOST
EXPECT A
TRAP--

-- BUT IT'S CLEAR
THE LADS IN SECURITY
HAVEN'T A *MOTION*
THAT ANYTHING'S
WRONG!

AYE, THIS
SENSOR-DETECTOR
TELLS THE TALE--

--AND WHAT
A WOEFUL
TALE 'TIS!

A MERE SLIP
OF A GIRL HAS
PENETRATED THE
TIGHTEST SECURITY
SYSTEM IN ALL
NORTHCAL, LAYING
BARE ITS GREATEST
SECRET FOR THE
PLUNDERING--

-- AND NOT A MAN OR
WOMAN IN THE ENTIRE
ATARI COMPLEX EVEN
SUSPECTS I'M HERE!

TO BE CONTINUED

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